

**Inclusive Education: Effects on  
Teacher Stress Related to Self-efficacy,  
Life Orientation, Education Level  
and Student Volumes**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate if there was a difference in the stress levels of teachers that teach an inclusive classroom (the target group) in comparison to teachers that do not (the control group). In so doing a number of other variables were examined for significant relationships with the stress experienced by teachers of an inclusive classroom, including the teachers perceived self efficacy, life orientation, education level taught and the number of special needs students in the classroom. A survey method was used on a convenience sample from 5 schools, 150 questionnaires were distributed but only 73 responses were received. Results indicated no significant difference in the stress levels between the two groups however a significant negative relationship was found between teacher stress and perceived self efficacy ( $r(49) = -.401, p = .004$ ). Implications for teaching resources and further professional development issues are discussed within.

**Keywords:** stress, teachers, self efficacy, life orientation, inclusive education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The last twenty years in Ireland has shown a significant move towards fully integrated inclusive classrooms in mainstream education schools across the country (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADinSNE), 2010). The initial integration was sparked by the Special Education Review Committee report in 1993 which advocated for a reduction in the segregation of special needs students and instead a drive towards as much inclusion of these children into mainstream education as possible, taking into consideration the feasibility and practicalities of this move. This strive for inclusion was driven by a worldwide demand for equality of service provisions and opportunities for children with special educational needs and a search for ways to reduce the discrimination and improve the wider public perception of these children (EADinSNE, 2010). This change has also led to significant amendments to the curriculum, teaching practices, training and levels of expectations for teachers (Irish National Teachers Organisation & The Equality Authority, 2004) . These changes are certainly not individual to Ireland, in fact Ireland has simply followed suit with a number of other countries around the globe. Hodkinson (2010) states his concern that this inclusion movement is an instance where policy development and philosophical thought may outpace practice. The following study will attempt to give a brief outline of the overall effects that the inclusion movement in Ireland has had on all stakeholders to the education system and will then focus specifically on the direct effects this change has had on the teachers that are currently working in an inclusive classroom, paying particular attention to any increased stress they may be experiencing.

## **1.1 Outwardly Effects of the Inclusion Movement**

The transition to inclusive education has undoubtedly a significant effect on the major stake-holders to the education service, namely, the children attending the schools, the parents of those children and the teachers and administrators of the schools offering inclusive education (Irish National Teachers Organisation & The Equality Authority, 2004). Idol's (2006) study of American schools that offered inclusive education at different levels examined the affect of inclusive classrooms on the other students and found that the majority of educators reported that other students remained unaffected by the presence of students with special education needs in their class. These findings were similar across both elementary and secondary school levels. This study also argued that based on their findings there was an improvement in other elementary student's attitudes towards students with special education needs as a result of the inclusion movement. It is difficult to know whether the improvement of attitudes that was recorded was solely due to the integration of inclusive education as there are so many other variables that could be involved here such as school ethos, management/educators attitudes, parental influence and general societal perceptions. A British study completed by Hodkinson (2010) found conflicting evidence which suggests that children actually have a narrow and negative conceptualisation of disability and their ignorance could in fact hinder the success of the inclusion movement. Hence, this study suggests that further research into other student's attitudes is required and more importantly further education of those students relating to disability and special needs education is a must at this stage. Given the fact that these conflicting research findings have very different origins, perhaps these varying attitudes can be attributed to cultural constructs and general societal attitudes across these different regions.

As mentioned above the main aim of the inclusion of special education needs students into mainstream educational settings was equality of access and opportunities for these

students, however, is there a price on this equality? Idol (2006) states that educators, both elementary and secondary are very much in favour of inclusion based on what they perceive are the benefits of this integration for these students. However, in order for students with special education needs to gain by enrolling in mainstream education the additional tools and resources they require as a result of their disability needs to be present and available to meet their needs. The inclusion effort requires efficient co-ordination of services, delegation and ownership of responsibilities, pre-agreed allocated funding and sufficient support and training for staff in order to meet the needs of special needs students (Hewitt-Taylor, 2009). Given the fact that special schools catering for students with special educational needs are well established and solely focused on special needs education they may be better equipped to meet the needs of special needs students. That is not to say that mainstream educational settings do not have the same commitment and intentions towards special needs students but it could be suggested that it will take time for mainstream schools to reach the same standard as special education schools. Nugent (2008) examined the educational experience of children with dyslexia across three different educational settings in Ireland and found the social experience of school to be of great importance to these children. The special education students she interviewed reported more positive aspects of attending special schools in comparison to mainstream schools and reading units. The main reason for this being the other student's attitudes towards them, in mainstream schools they reported as being bullied and feeling isolated and excluded because of their disability, whereas in the special schools they had higher levels of self-esteem and a more positive view of themselves as students.

Parental reports of their children's educational experience generally fall in line with the child's feedback (Hodkinson, 2010). Hence finding the right school for their children is the main concern for parents of special needs students. As a result of the inclusion movement the parent's right to choose the school they wish to send their child has now been increased

and widened to include mainstream education. However for parents of special needs children this decision is often complex in nature. Given the conflicting research findings and varying professional opinions on the benefits of inclusive education parents of special needs students are faced with basing their decision on what they feel themselves is the best option for their child. Undoubtedly there is a significant amount of additional pressure on these parents, yet they do have the benefit of having the control over the educational setting their child experiences. Hewitt-Taylor (2009) argues that given the complexity of this decision process for parents it is only fair that parents should receive user-friendly information in a timely manner regarding the options available to them and also have access to someone who can discuss the practicalities of each option with them. This is the ideal situation however this does not always happen in reality.

The primary source of information for parents when deciding the best educational option for their child is located at each individual school, facilitated by meeting with the educators and administrators to discuss what each school has to offer special education students. This is one of the many additional responsibilities assigned to teachers as a result of a move towards inclusive education. Parents who meet with teachers to discuss the educational resources available for their children are usually expecting a certain level of commitment and availability from the teachers. Given the recent increased workload for teachers at times dealing with parents can be another source of stress for the teacher (Schaubman, Stetson & Plog, 2011). Although meeting with parents and attempting to meet the parents expectations of them is certainly a source of stress for teachers, this is not the only additional stressor associated with the inclusion of special needs students into mainstream education. Younghusband, Garlie & Church (2003) researched inclusive education in Canada and found that there was a common concern among teachers that they did not have the training necessary to meet the needs of special needs students included in their classroom.



Their study also found that teachers are being asked to develop new practices & policies in order to include special needs students in their class hence resulting in an increased workload for the teacher. This study would suggest that as a result of inclusion of special needs students into mainstream education there has been an increase in teacher workload and demands, hence inadvertently an increase in stress for these teachers. The sentiment of needing additional training to meet the needs of special education students was echoed in Idol's (2006) report. Despite the educators interviewed having a very positive attitude towards inclusion and identifying the benefits they observed as a result of the integration they also indicated that more professional development relating to inclusion was required. This request for additional training and development was not a criticism but rather a positive suggestion for further improvement of the service being provided.

## **1.2 Other Variables That May Lead to Increased Teacher Stress**

With the integration of an inclusive education environment, one would anticipate an increase in workload on the teachers of inclusive classrooms. Paulse (2005, p3) states that "inclusive education's rise to prominence has changed the traditional roles of teachers from using a talk and chalk method to being more pupil centred." International research has advised that teaching has become one of the most stressful professions in recent years (Beck & Garguilo, 2001; Billingsley, 2004; Eloff, Engelbrecht, Oswald, & Swart, 2003). However, the reasons behind this proclaimed increased stress have been attributed to a number of different variables. The variables to be considered in this study are teacher's life orientation, perceived self-efficacy, the educational level being taught, that being primary or secondary level of education and the number of students in the class with special needs. Li (2012) states that life orientation is simply a measure of a person's dispositional optimism. Optimism has been defined as "the favourability of a person's generalized outcome expectancy" (Scheier &

Carver, 1985, p.232). “Perceived self efficacy is concerned with judgements of personal capability” (Bandura, 1997, p. 11).

### **1.3 Life Orientation**

It would be interesting to compare the stress levels of the educators used in Idol’s (2006) study with those surveyed in Younghusband et al (2003) study which could also perhaps provide some insight into general attitudes and life orientation of the educators involved. Brown, Howcroft & Jacobs (2009, p.450) study of teachers educating learners with intellectual disabilities found a significant positive correlation between life orientations and coping resources, Antonovsky (as cited by Brown et al, 2009) defined this as “any characteristic of an individual that facilitates effective tension management”. This would suggest that educators with a more positive outlook and attitude in general were better equipped to cope with change and challenges such as inclusive education. This is not to indicate that a positive attitude will solely prevent a teacher from experiencing additional stress as a result of the inclusion of special needs students into their classroom but rather that it may help to reduce the level of stress they are exposed to. Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley’s (1999) study of a large sample of primary and secondary school teachers highlights the importance of the teacher’s outlook or perception of the demands that are made of them and argue that perception will in itself influence the degree of stress they feel as a result. According to Younghusband et al (2003), teachers appear at times to work in a negative culture so it could be argued that if they are exposed daily to negativity then perhaps this will impact their overall outlook on the job and facilitate low morale and the growth of a negative attitude towards their work.

## **1.4 Self Efficacy**

Self Efficacy is a similarly significant variable that could be considered when attempting to examine the stress levels of educators teaching an inclusive classroom. McCormick & Ayres (2009) concluded the negative relationships between understanding what was required by the changes, and teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in new ways are matters of concern, given the close nexus between self-efficacy and performance (Bandura, 1997). Teachers with a higher self efficacy have been seen to be more positive and responsive to students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), experiencing a lower level of stress (Greenwood, Olejnik, & Parkay, 1990) and showing less anger about negative or disruptive student behaviour (Glenn, 1994). In addition to the argument for high self-efficacy helping to reduce the stress of the teaching profession is the notion of high collective efficacy. Klassen (2010, p. 350) studied this area and concluded that "teachers beliefs in their collective capabilities to manage student behaviour provides some relief of the negative effects of that job stress".

## **1.5 Number of Special Needs Students in the Classroom**

Sivley's (2006) US study of the stress levels of regular education teachers who work with special needs children found that the number of special needs students served was related to teacher stress with more students resulting in higher stress rather than a relationship between stress and level of training or experience. However, there were also a number of interactions between variables in this study such as a difference between gender and educational level being taught and also gender and years teaching. The study suggested that although overall there was a higher stress rating in educators teaching a class with a high number of special needs students, this level was affected by gender and the years of teaching experience the teacher had. Lambert, McCarthy, O'Donnell, & Wang (2009) produced similar findings in relation to the number of students in the classroom except they found that the increase in stress was reportedly linked to an increase in the number of students with

behavioural problems more so than learning disabilities. This brings us back to a matter of definition and classification, not all students with learning disabilities also present with behavioural difficulties but yet they are placed under the same classification of having special educational needs. However in contrast to the above Williams & Gersch (2004) attempted to examine if there was a significant difference in the stress levels of teachers of mainstream inclusive education in comparison to teachers in special schools. Their research focused on the fact that in mainstream schools there are larger class sizes and fewer special needs assistants available but unfortunately results supported a null hypothesis.

### **1.6 Educational Level Taught**

Consideration should also be given to the relationship, if any, between the teachers level of stress and the educational level of the students they teach. Borg & Falzon (1991) research stated that per their studies teachers of older pupils reported a higher stress level. This argument was further compounded by Williams & Gersch (2004) which found that the younger the age group taught the lower the stress levels. It is possible that younger children may be easier to control than older children and are more willing to view the teacher as a complete authoritative figure in comparison to older children who may not have the same level of respect or admiration for the adult teacher. Or perhaps the curriculum being taught to younger children is easier to roll out for an adult teacher to a young child in comparison to the older age group curriculum.

### **1.7 Overall purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater insight into Irish teachers work life and the stress factors involved in this occupation. Through the collection of quantitative data from a convenient sample of primary and secondary school teachers the study will attempt to identify if there is a difference in the stress levels of mainstream education teachers of

inclusive classrooms in comparison to those teachers who have no special needs students in their class. In so doing the study will investigate any relationships between teacher stress and the other variables mentioned above. Much of the research completed to date examining any difference in stress levels of teachers of inclusive classrooms has been done outside of Ireland, hence this study will extend this research to Irish teachers who have experienced similar changes in recent years. It will be interesting to see if there is any difference in the findings from an Irish perspective and if so if any of these differences could potentially be attributable to cross cultural aspects. In addition, if any of the variables under examination show a significant correlation with the level of stress experiences by teachers who teach an inclusive classroom, the study will identify both the practical and research implications of these findings and make recommendations to possibly help alleviate the impact of these stress variables.

To summarise, Kyriacou (1987, p.146) defines teacher stress simply as “the experience of a teacher of unpleasant emotions such as tension, frustration, anger, and depression resulting from aspects of his work as a teacher”. The general issue of stress has gained increased focus and attention in recent years given the profound effects it appears to have on an individual’s mental and physical health which in turn affects their home life as well as their productivity at work. This issue certainly extends to teachers as much if perhaps not more than other professions, however there has been no research performed to date on how the inclusion movement in Ireland has affected the stress levels in teachers in our ever changing education system. This is an area of concern given the fact that the teachers are the link between all parties to the education service, they work directly with the children, they provide feedback to the parents of those children and they are also the source of information about the front line experience of teaching for the management team and department of education. Hence if there is a stress on this link in the chain there could inevitably be a gap

in the communication and information process which can lead to even greater issues arising further down the line.

### **1.8 Hypotheses**

H1: It is hypothesized that there will be a significantly higher stress rating among regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to teachers that do not.

H2: There will be a significant negative correlation between the level of stress for the regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and their perceived self efficacy.

H3: There will be a significant negative correlation between the level of stress for the regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and their overall life orientation.

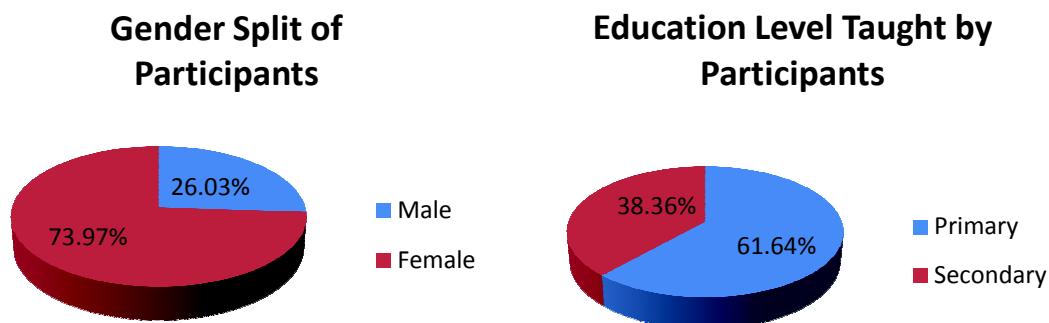
H4: There will be a significant positive correlation between the stress level ratings of regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and the number of special needs students in their class.

H5: There will be a significantly higher stress rating among secondary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to primary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Participants

Convenience sampling was used to obtain the participants for this study. The participants were teachers currently working in a mixture of both primary and secondary mainstream schools mainly based in the East and South East of Ireland. Five schools were involved in the study: three primary schools (N=45) and two secondary schools (N=28). All schools are located in a variety of socio-economic status areas of the country. In total 150 questionnaires were distributed across the selected schools of which 73 questionnaires were returned. According to Sekaran (2003) an acceptable response rate for questionnaires is seen to be approximately 30%. The response rate for this study was 48.6%. The sample group (N=73) consists of male (N=19) and female (N=54).



The participants were selected based firstly upon the schools approval to allow distribution of the questionnaires to their staff and secondly upon the teachers availability and willingness to participate. The school principals were initially contacted via telephone to provide them with the detail of the study and ask for their permission and assistance in distributing the questionnaires. The selection criteria used stated that the participants had to be presently working as classroom teachers of a mainstream school consequently this excluded the school principal, school administration staff, resource teachers, substitute

teachers and special needs assistants. It was explained to the school principals that participation was entirely anonymous and voluntary.

Each participant filled out a demographic data form at the start of the questionnaire which provided some interesting findings. The average age of the teachers that participated in the study was 33 and they had an average of 10 years of teaching experience, ranging from 1 year to a maximum of 37 years. The teachers reported an average class size of 27.6 students per class.

## **2.2 Design**

A quantitative empirical investigation was employed for the purpose of this study. Due to the tight time constraints surrounding this project survey research between participants was selected as the preferred method. The use of a survey allowed the researcher to gather a large quantity of data in a short space of time. Survey research also enables the study of relationships between variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The predictor variable for all proposed hypotheses of this study is the level of teacher stress rating. The criterion variable for H1 is an inclusive class versus a non-inclusive class, for H2 is the level of perceived self-efficacy, for H3 is a positive life orientation versus a negative life orientation, for H4 is the number of special needs students in the class and for H5 is educational level being taught. The target group used is the sample of participants that currently teach an inclusive classroom. The control group will be used for comparison purposes to the target group and these will be the participants that do not currently teach an inclusive classroom.

## **2.3 Materials**

A quantitative survey was constructed using three previously validated and tested questionnaires and combined with an introductory section the purpose of which was to elicit the demographic data required. The demographic questions asked covered the following



areas: gender, age, education level, number of years teaching, number of students in the classroom, number of special needs students in the classroom, number of hours planning and preparing work, whether there is support of a special needs assistant in the classroom and if the teacher feels supported by his/her peers and superiors.

### 1) Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI)

The first section outlined the Teacher Stress Inventory originally developed by Fimian (1985) was utilised for the purpose of research project. This questionnaire is designed to measure levels of stress specifically targeted at the teaching profession. The TSI questionnaire has an alpha reliability of 0.85 (Hanif, 2004). The validity of the TSI is apparent in that the stress factors presented in the inventory were experienced at moderate levels by the norm group of 3,401 teachers. There are 49 questions in total which examine 10 different subscales of stress. The following table outlines the subscales presented in the questionnaire for teachers to rate their perceived degree of stress:

|                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Time management           | Emotional manifestations      |
| Work-related stressors    | Fatigue manifestations        |
| Professional Distress     | Cardiovascular manifestations |
| Discipline and motivation | Gastronomical manifestations  |
| Professional Investment   | Behavioural manifestations    |

To provide the reader with a better understanding of the type of questions asked in this questionnaire, below are two sample questions:

|   |
|---|
| <i>7. There isn't enough time to get things done.</i>         |
| <i>29. I lack opportunities for professional improvement.</i> |

The teacher stress questionnaire is used to determine the participants level of stress based on their responses which are recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from no noticeable strength, mild strength/barely noticeable, medium strength/moderately noticeable, great

strength/very noticeable to major strength/extremely noticeable. One would expect that the lowest stress score a participant can get is 49 and the highest stress score that can be achieved is 245, however the instructions accompanying the questionnaire advise the user to then get the average score for each sub scale before calculating the average total score for each respondent, by doing so the lowest score a respondent can get is 1 and the highest is 5.

## 2) Teacher Self Efficacy Scale

The second section detailed the Teacher Self Efficacy Scale created by Schwarzer, Schmitz & Daytner (1999). There were three steps taken in developing this measurement tool, firstly the identification of the different job skills required for teaching, secondly the development of 27 items used to assess the four major areas identified in step 1 and lastly administering a questionnaire made up of those 27 items to approximately 300 German teachers three times in order to extract the 10 items necessary to assess teacher self efficacy (Schwarzer et al, 1999). Cronbach's alpha was found to be between .76, and .82, test-retest reliability resulted in .67 (N = 158), and .76 (N = 193) respectively, for the period of one year. For the period of two years it was found to be .65 (N = 161) (Schwarze & Hallum, 2008). The tool comprises of 10 questions and the responses to these questions are measured on a four-point Likert rating scale ranging from not at all true, hardly true, moderately true to exactly true. The higher the scoring in this section supports a greater self efficacy for the respondent. The lowest score a participant can get in this questionnaire is 10 and the highest score that can be achieved is 40. Examples of the questions asked are as follows:

|  |
|--|
| <i>3. When I try really hard, I am able to reach even the most difficult students.</i> |
|--|

|  |
|--|
| <i>9. I know that I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects</i> |
|--|

### 3) The Revised LOT-R, Life Orientation Test

The final section of the questionnaire included the Revised LOT-R, Life Orientation Test which was re-evaluated by Scheier, Carver & Bridges (1994) to determine individual differences in general optimism versus pessimism. Glaesmer et al (2012) performed a confirmatory factor analysis which found that optimism and pessimism are negatively correlated and thus confirm the bi-dimensionality of the LOT-R. Their research supports the use of this tool for epidemiological studies. There are 10 questions in total in this section. The original scale was revised to eliminate two items which dealt more with coping skills rather than expectations for future outcomes and the correlation between the revised and the original scale is .95, Cronbach's alpha also found to be .78 (Scheier et al, 1994). Again, this section of the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale rating, however, for this section the responses ranged from agreeing a lot, agreeing a little, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, disagreeing a little to disagreeing a lot. Four of the questions in this questionnaire are filler items and are not used for scoring, hence the lowest score a participant can get is 6 and the highest score that can be achieved is 30. Examples of the questions asked are as follows:

|  |
|--|
| <i>3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.</i> |
|--|

|   |
|---|
| <i>4. I'm always optimistic about my future</i> |
|---|

The finalised questionnaire was also accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research and assuring respondents of the anonymity and confidentiality of the research. This letter also indicated that participation in the questionnaire was entirely voluntary and any data gathered would be stored in a secure location for a period of one year after the examination process prior to being appropriately destroyed. A debriefing section was attached to the back of the questionnaire to thank the participants for their time and effort

and also to provide them with some further detail about the researchers use for the data gathered.

## **2.4 Procedure**

As mentioned above, prior to commencement of the data gathering phase a number of schools were targeted by the researcher and the school principals were contacted via telephone to obtain approval and assistance for distribution of the questionnaires to their staff panel. This was subsequently followed up with a written request which contained an attached copy of the questionnaire sent electronically to those principals for review and approval. Once this was completed the physical copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the selected schools with a secure collection box. These were delivered to the school principals by the researcher and verbal instructions were given to the principals to reiterate the sample selection criteria, distribution and collection instructions. The researcher highlighted to the school principals the importance of upholding the anonymity and confidentiality of the study through the use of the secure collection box which was to be placed in the school staff room which the principal could collect at the end of the working week on behalf of the researcher. The researcher also explained to the school principals that participation in this questionnaire was entirely voluntary for the teachers and should not be monitored or questioned in any way. A date for collection was given to the school principals and ad hoc phone calls were made by the researcher to answer any questions or concerns that the participants may have presented with. Extensions to the collection date were also given as requested by a number of the school principals due to conflicting work commitments at this time. All five collection boxes were collected by the researcher on the specified date and the schools which have requested to view the results of the study have been noted and will be contacted once the results have been verified by the examiner.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The results show that of the 73 respondents, 51 (69.9%) taught an inclusive classroom and 22 (30.1%) did not. Of the 51 respondents that taught an inclusive classroom only 31 (58.8%) of them had the help of a special needs assistant on a daily basis. Summary descriptive statistics are displayed in table 1 and 2 below. Table 1 provides information relating to the teachers who teach an inclusive classroom which show that the average number of years a teacher who is teaching an inclusive classroom has been teaching is 9.94 with a minimum of 1 years teaching experience and a maximum of 32 years. The results also show that the average age of those teachers is 33.27 with the youngest teacher being 21 and the oldest being 54. The average number of special needs students in the classroom is 3 with the average hours of preparation work required to teach that classroom being 2.29.

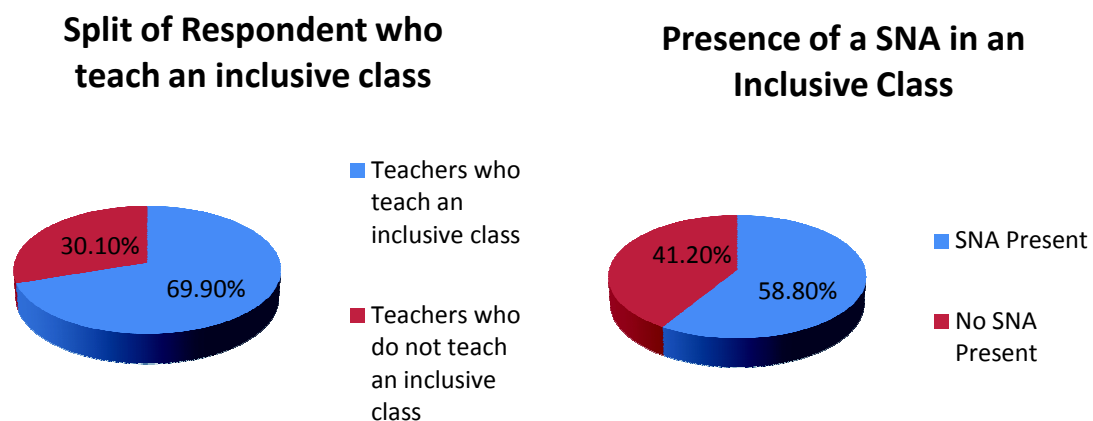


Table 1 *Descriptive statistics for teachers who teach an inclusive class.*

| Variable                                   | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Standard Deviation |
|--|----|---------|---------|-------|--------------------|
| No. of years teaching                      | 51 | 1       | 32      | 9.94  | 8.46               |
| Age of teacher                             | 51 | 21      | 54      | 33.27 | 8.91               |
| No. of special needs students in the class | 51 | 1       | 8       | 3     | 1.87               |

|                               |    |      |      |       |      |
|-------------------------------|----|------|------|-------|------|
| No. of hours preparation work | 51 | 1    | 5    | 2.29  | .88  |
| Total Stress                  | 51 | 1.16 | 3.78 | 2.38  | 0.62 |
| Total Self-Efficacy           | 51 | 21   | 40   | 31.1  | 4.84 |
| Total Life Orientation        | 51 | 6    | 24   | 13.57 | 5.21 |

Table 2 provides information relating to the teachers who do not teach an inclusive classroom which show that the average number of years a teacher who does not teach an inclusive classroom has been teaching is 9.64 with a minimum of 1 years teaching experience and a maximum of 37 years. The results also show that the average age of those teachers is 32.77 with the youngest teacher being 21 and the oldest being 57. The average hours of preparation work required to teach that classroom being 2.05 which isn't much different from the average number of preparation hours required to teach an inclusive classroom.

Table 2 *Descriptive statistics for teachers who do not teach an inclusive class.*

| Variable                      | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------|----|---------|---------|-------|--------------------|
| No. of years teaching         | 22 | 1       | 37      | 9.64  | 8.65               |
| Age of teacher                | 22 | 21      | 57      | 32.77 | 9.71               |
| No. of hours preparation work | 22 | 0       | 5       | 2.05  | 1.17               |
| Total Stress                  | 22 | 1.71    | 3.53    | 2.32  | 0.42               |
| Total Self-Efficacy           | 22 | 26      | 39      | 32.09 | 4.03               |
| Total Life Orientation        | 22 | 6       | 28      | 15.77 | 5.79               |

Overall, for the teachers that teach an inclusive classroom their overall stress score (mean = 2.38, SD = 0.62) was slightly higher than those that do not teach an inclusive

classroom (mean = 2.32, SD = 0.42). Teachers who teach an inclusive classroom also scored slightly lower on the self-efficacy scale (mean = 31.1, SD = 4.84) in comparison to those who do not teach an inclusive classroom (mean = 32.09, SD = 4.03). Again, there was little difference in life orientation scores, teachers who teach an inclusive classroom scored only slightly lower (mean = 13.57, SD = 5.21) than those teachers who do not teach an inclusive classroom (mean = 15.77, SD = 5.79).

### **3.2 Inferential Statistics**

Prior to commencement of inferential statistical analysis the data was tested for normality. These tests revealed that the stress and self efficacy variables were normally distributed, however, life orientation and the numbers of special needs students in the classroom were not normally distributed. Based on this information non-parametric tests were chosen for correlation analysis of life orientation and no. of special needs students in the classroom.

#### **Hypothesis 1 – Difference in stress rating between teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to those who do not.**

As summarised in table 3 below teachers who teach an inclusive classroom (mean = 2.38, SD = .62) were found to have higher levels of stress as teachers who do not teach an inclusive classroom (mean = 2.32, SD = .42). The 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -.192 and .307. An independent samples t-test found that there is no significant difference between the stress levels of teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and those who do not ( $t(71) = .465, p = .644$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted. This result provided no support for the original hypothesis as described above.

Table 3: An Independent Samples T-test table displaying the differences between teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and those who do not for the rating of overall stress

| Variables     | Groups                                  | Mean | SD  | t    | df | p    |
|---------------|---|------|-----|------|----|------|
| Stress Rating | Teachers teaching an inclusive class    | 2.38 | .62 | .465 | 71 | .644 |
|               | Teachers teaching a non-inclusive class | 2.32 | .42 |      |    |      |

### Hypothesis 2 - Correlation between the levels of stress for the regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and their perceived self-efficacy

As illustrated in table 4 below a Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was a moderate negative significant relationship between teacher stress and teacher self-efficacy ( $r(49) = -.401, p = .004$ ) for teachers who teach an inclusive classroom meaning that any increase in self efficacy will reduce the levels of stress experienced. Figure 1 displays this relationship further. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding supports the original hypothesis.

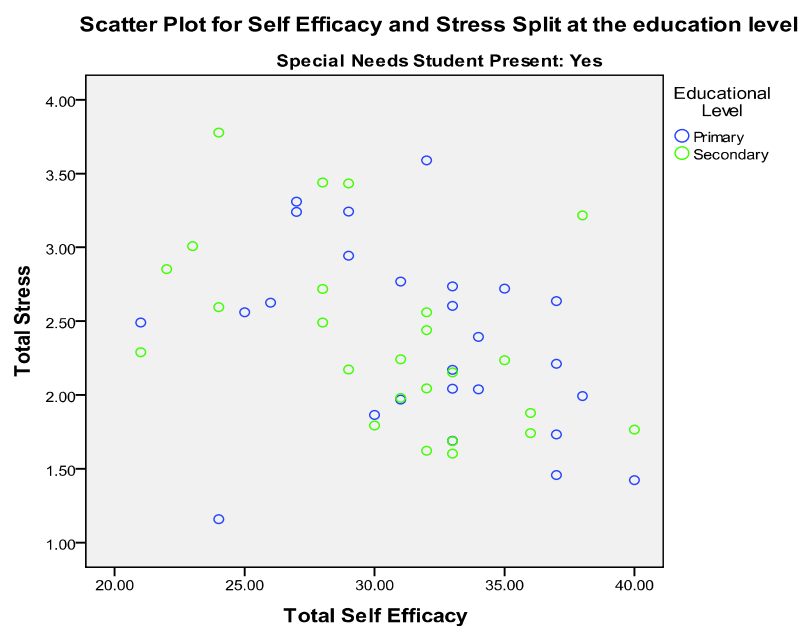


Figure 1 Scatter Plot showing the relationship between self efficacy and stress



**Hypothesis 3 - Correlation between the levels of stress for the regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and their overall life orientation.**

As illustrated in table 4 below a Spearman's rho correlation found that there was no significant association between teacher stress and overall life orientation ( $r_s(51) = -.09$ ,  $p = .514$ ) for teachers who teach an inclusive classroom. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This result does not support the original suggested hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 4 - Correlation between the stress level ratings of regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and the number of special needs students in their class.**

As illustrated in table 4 below a Spearman's rho correlation found that there was no significant association between teacher stress and the number of special needs students in the classroom ( $r_s(51) = -.261$ ,  $p = .07$ ) for teachers who teach an inclusive classroom. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This result provides no support for the original hypothesis and further supports hypothesis 1 findings that found no significant difference in the stress levels of teachers an inclusive classroom in comparison to those who do not.

Table 4: *Correlation Table*

| Variable       | Teacher Self-Efficacy | Life Orientation | No. of special needs students in classroom |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|--|
| Teacher Stress | -.401**               | -.094            | -.261                                      |

\* p significant at .05 level.

\*\*p significant at .01 level.

**Hypothesis 5 – Difference in the stress rating among secondary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to primary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom.**

As illustrated in table 4 below a Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference between the ratings given by inclusive classroom participants in primary and secondary education levels. The primary education level had a mean rank of 26.23, compared to the mean rank of 25.76 for the secondary education level. The Mann-Whitney revealed that the primary education level and the secondary education level did not differ significantly ( $z = -.113$ ,  $p = .910$ ). Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted. This finding provides no support for the original hypothesis described above.

Table 4: *A Mann-Whitney U test table displaying the differences between secondary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and primary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom for the rating of overall stress*

| Variables     | Groups   | Mean Ranking | z     | p    |
|---------------|--|--------------|-------|------|
| Stress Rating | Primary level education teachers teaching an inclusive class   | 26.23        | -.113 | .910 |
|               | Secondary level education teachers teaching an inclusive class | 25.76        |       |      |

## 4. DISCUSSION

Given the changes in the Irish education system in recent years relating to the education of special needs students, the present study sought to investigate if there is a difference in the stress levels of regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to those who do not and if those stress levels were related to a number of variables such as education level taught, perceived self-efficacy, life orientation and the number of special needs students in the classroom. Of the teachers approached to complete the questionnaire for this research only 48.6% actually responded and although this is in line with similar research studies, it had been hoped that a higher response rate could have been achieved. Given the small sample size the reader should proceed with caution when interpreting the findings of this research. The findings that emerged from the research carried out provided mixed results.

**H1: It was hypothesized that there would be a significantly higher stress rating among teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to teachers that do not.**

In contrast to Younghusband et al's (2003) study of the sources of teacher stress which found that both curriculum changes and the inclusion movement further compounded a pre-existing highly stressful occupation, the present study found no significant difference in the stress levels of mainstream education teachers that teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to those who do not. It should be noted however, that the Younghusband et al (2003) study took a qualitative approach to their research while the present study was solely focused on quantitative data therefore this difference in approaches could account for the lack of similar findings. The findings of Younghusband et al (2003) cite the main sources of teacher stress as curriculum changes and the inclusion movement, a culture of negativity,

impact/stigma of workplace stress, work overload, student behaviour, disillusionment and lack of administrative support. When comparing these findings to the questionnaire used for the present study all areas are covered by the questions asked with the exception of the curriculum changes and inclusion movement. This area is simply too specific for a general questionnaire, hence it is possible that the lack of identification of this area within the questionnaire used could attribute further to the lack of support for this hypothesis. However, it would be expected that changes to the curriculum and the inclusion movement would inadvertently result in an increased workload for the teachers and further challenges relating to student behaviour and these topics were certainly covered by the questionnaire so one would have hoped that any increased stress relating to teaching an inclusive classroom would have been identified in these sections if the hypothesis was to be supported.

In support of the present study's findings is Idol's (2006) research. They found a very positive attitude among the educators that participated in their research towards the inclusion movement. Similar to Younghusband et al's (2003) study Idol (2006) took a qualitative approach and interviewed a number of teachers about the effects of the inclusion movement on their profession. Based on Idol's (2006) study the educators did not report any increased stress as a result of the inclusion movement and they appeared very much in favour of this change. They did however report that they required further professional development in this area to continue to improve their skills and experience in educating students with special needs. Professional investment and development is covered by the questionnaire used in the present study, therefore any additional stress relating to this area would have been identified in this section.

**H2: There will be a significant negative correlation between the level of stress for the regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and their perceived self efficacy.**

The present study found a moderate negative significant correlation between the level of stress for regular education teachers that teach an inclusive classroom and their perceived self-efficacy. Some of the sources of teacher stress identified in McCormick & Ayres (2009) study were the teachers understanding of what was required of them by the changes to the curriculum and how these changes would be implemented. Their study found a negative relationship between this identified source of stress and the teachers perceived self-efficacy. The present study provides support for McCormick & Ayres (2009) findings. Although McCormick & Ayre's (2009) study was a longitudinal study it did utilise a self reported questionnaire to gather the data necessary, a similar approach that was used by the current study therefore one could conclude that the use of similar approaches could help to explain the similar findings that resulted. In addition to this McCormick & Ayre's (2009) cited one of the limitations to their study as being a small sample size of 55 participants, this number is of a similar level to the number of respondents used in the present study which could further have contributed to the similar findings across both study's. McCormick & Ayre (2009, p.473) did however note that although the small sample size could be seen as a limitation one should also take into consideration that findings from the first data gathering exercised were fully supported one year later by the second set of results which they state reinforces the view that teachers "bring their preconceptions, beliefs and values when they play their role in curriculum reform".

Klassen's (2010) study argued that if teacher's collective efficacy in managing challenging student behaviour is positive then this will help to reduce the level of stress that the teachers experience. It also suggests that both self and collective efficacy can enhance a

teachers job satisfaction, and in turn influence the level of stress a teacher experiences.

Therefore, one could conclude that there is an indirect link between positive self-efficacy and a reduction in the levels of stress experienced. Our present study supports these findings further.

**H3: There will be a significant negative correlation between the level of stress for the regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and their overall life orientation.**

There is quite an extensive range of research that suggests that a positive life orientation can have a positive effect on reducing the stress levels of teachers however the present study's findings do not support the hypothesis that there is a significant negative correlation between the level of stress for regular education teachers that teach an inclusive classroom and their overall life orientation. The findings of the present study contradict the results reported by Griffith et al (1999) which suggests that through the use of effective coping strategies a teacher can obtain a more positive and objective outlook on situations which can affect the teachers perception of stress. Griffith et al's (1999) study did however cover a very large sample population of 780 participants in a questionnaire survey, hence this vast difference in sample size could have attributed to the differential findings between that study and the present study.

Brown et al (2009) also proposed that based on their findings there was a significant positive correlation between teachers life orientation and coping resources used to prevent any increased stress or reduce pre-existing stressors. Although this study took a similar quantitative approach to the research with the use of questionnaires and their sample size of 59 respondents was also near the present study's sample size the main difference was that the participants in their study were only special education teachers teaching in special

schools rather than in mainstream schools. Williams & Gersch (2004) argue that special schools are better equipped to support the needs of special needs students mainly because of the additional resources they have available that are wholly focused on special education, however, that study found no significant difference in the stress levels of special education teachers in comparison to mainstream education teachers.

**H4: There will be a significant positive correlation between the stress level ratings of regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and the number of special needs students in their class.**

The present study found no significant positive correlation between the stress levels of regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and the number of special needs students in their class and hence does not support the findings of Sivley's (2006) US study. Sivley (2006) examined a number of variables in her research such as gender, grade level taught, number of years teaching experience and number of hours continuing education, however, her findings suggested that the most predominant stressor in a regular education teachers role when teaching an inclusive classroom was the number of special needs students in the class. Sivley's study firstly is a US study which could account for the difference in findings because of the cultural difference between Irish teachers and American teachers. Secondly, her study covered a much larger sample size of 469 teachers in comparison to the present study's sample size of 73, hence this could account for the lack of evidence provided by the present study to support Sivley's (2006) findings.

**H5: There will be a significantly higher stress rating among secondary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to primary level education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom.**

Williams & Gersch (2004) reported results of a positive relationship between the age group taught and the amount of paperwork associated with the job. The increased amount of paperwork as a result was suggested to be a significant factor that correlated with stress. However, when tested the present study found no difference in the stress level ratings of regular education teachers that teach an inclusive classroom at the higher education level (secondary) in comparison to the lower education level (primary). The present study cannot support the findings of Williams & Gersch (2004). Some of the possible reasons for the difference in the results could be accounted for by the fact that Williams & Gersch's (2004) sample was split across both regular education teachers and special education teachers which contrasts with the present study's sample of only regular education teachers. Williams & Gersch (2004) study is a UK study so it is possible that the educational guidelines surrounding paperwork reporting in the UK are significantly different to the paperwork demands for special needs education in Ireland. It is possible that the demands for paperwork reporting do not increase with the age of the student in Ireland and hence would account for the lack of an increase in stress as a result. This is an area which could be researched further in the future.

#### **4.1 Limitations of the present study**

With regard to the present study it should be noted that the preliminary findings were based solely on questionnaire self-reports and in view of the sample size obtained, these findings need cautious interpretation by the reader. There are a number of disadvantages to using questionnaires such as the fact that questionnaires are usually standardised and cannot



be modified after the questionnaire has been distributed. The information received from a questionnaire is also reported after an event so the respondents may have forgotten to include important issues (Milne, 1999). In addition, one major issue in survey data gathering is socially desirable responding by the respondent which has been defined as “the tendency for people to present themselves favourably according to current cultural norms” (Mick, 1996, p.106). This type of limitation could have affected the present study given the fact that the teachers participating may have wanted to present themselves as strong and capable of the job perhaps due to a fear of any negative repercussions as a result of reporting otherwise, despite the researchers best efforts to confirm confidentiality and anonymity. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know whether the sample respondent were representative of all teachers or not. Whilst the response rate was acceptable, the overall sample size achieved was low and there was an unequal distribution of teachers that teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to those who do not, therefore this could have introduced additional elements of bias into the research.

Furthermore, the targeted sample of mainstream educators proved to be a difficult sample to obtain possibly due to the fact that teachers do not have very much spare time during their working day to fill out a questionnaire. In addition, approval to distribute the questionnaire was not an easy task either and this is the main reason that convenience sampling was used. As a result the findings of this study are specific to certain clusters of areas mainly based in the East and South East of the country and cannot be generalised to the other geographical areas, however, it is possible that a similar situation could be found in other schools around the country. It should be noted that although the schools used in the sample were based in the East and South East of the country, the schools chosen did reflect a good mix of both urban and rural settings to eliminate any bias that could have arisen from this.

## 4.2 Recommendations for Future Research

As the sample size for this study was small and based on the evidence provided in previous literatures that used a larger sample, a similar study with a larger randomized sample is warranted. However, prior to any further research beginning it would be recommended that a targeted focus group of teachers that are willing to partake be conducted in order to further focus the study and identify the most predominant stressors in this occupation as outlined by Irish teachers themselves. Any future research in this area should be expanded to include qualitative data in addition to quantitative in order to gain the best insight into the presenting stressors in the teaching profession. Williams & Gersch (2004) actually piloted their questionnaire twice and used the pilot to interview the teachers prior to final distribution which enabled them to modify the questionnaire appropriately to ensure all areas of research were accounted for therein. Additionally, given the difficulties faced with the present study in obtaining approval to distribute questionnaires and receiving an acceptable response rate from the teachers it appears that timing of the research is key. Distribution of the questionnaires for the present study took place at a similar time to a mid-term break and parent teacher meetings, consequently the sample of teachers used already had a heavy workload at this time of year and so responding to the questionnaire was not a priority for them. Any future research should be mindful of this and time the data collection exercise appropriately.

The fact that this study showed a relationship between stress levels and a teachers perceived self-efficacy is an area that could be researched further in the future. Based on this research we can conclude that if a teacher's self-efficacy is high then this will help to reduce the stress they experience daily. The ultimate goal of this form of research is to identify and help to reduce any negative emotions or behaviours such as stress, hence perhaps future

research could investigate ways to improve a teacher's self-efficacy. Some options for this could be through further training and increased peer and/or superior support.

The other variables chosen in the present study did not support the hypothesis for a significant relationship with stress, however based on previous literature there are a vast number of variables that can affect teacher stress apart from the ones examined in this study. According to Sivley (2006), there are a number of interactions between the variables chosen in her study such as differences in stress levels based on gender, number of years teaching experience and the number of relevant training completed by the participant. These variables could be considered for examination in any future research on teacher stress.

Lastly, in light of the current media attention surrounding the proposed curriculum changes at the secondary level of education and the elimination of the Junior Certificate exam (Independent, 2013) there appears to be scope for research into the potential effect this change will have on both the teachers and the students as a result. Independent (2013) has reported that teachers are concerned about the negative backlash from parents if these exams are abolished and replaced with a teacher assessment of their students. Once again, this additional responsibility being placed upon the shoulders of the teachers could potentially have an effect on their levels of stress.

### **4.3 Implications of Research**

Despite the fact that this study did not find any significant differences in the stress levels of teachers teaching an inclusive classroom in comparison to those who do not, it has highlighted the need to take teacher stress seriously in schools based on previous research published to date. The findings of this research weakened the previous literature that was used to create the hypothesis for this study. Based on the findings of this research it would suggest that even teachers who teach an inclusive classroom do not encounter any additional

stressors to those teachers who do not teach an inclusive classroom. To further support these findings was the result that there was no direct relationship between the number of special needs students in the class and the level of stress experienced by the teacher. Could the lack of increased stress in an inclusive classroom be accounted for by the presence of a special needs assistant in the classroom? The present study showed only 58.8% of inclusive classrooms had a special needs assistant present. This could be due to the fact that the respondents identified students that they believed had special education needs, however these students have yet to be officially diagnosed and allocated a special needs assistant. The implications of this research would suggest that the inclusion movement has not had any negative impact on teacher stress and teachers appear to be managing this movement as well as they have any other change. It is however important to note that despite the fact that teachers appear to be navigating this change with an insignificant amount of additional stress, the resources currently available to teachers of an inclusive classroom should remain and improvement of these resources should always be a point of investigation and discussion.

Consequently, if teachers are not experiencing any additional stress as a result of the inclusion movement as highlighted by this research then this would suggest that this movement has little or no indirect effects on the children in the classroom also. Yoon (2002) argues that “negative teacher-student relationships were predicted by teacher stress”. Therefore, the lack of additional stress related to the inclusion movement should help to promote and maintain positive teacher-student relationships. Further research in this area however can help plan for any future changes and how these may impact the students in mainstream schools.

The findings also highlighted the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and stress but yet no relationship between life orientation and stress. Further research examining

the possible ways to increase a teacher's self-efficacy would be recommended. The information gathered from this type of further research could be used by the schools and the department of education to further develop their training plans for their staff in order to enhance the teacher's perceived self-efficacy. Training of this nature would be recommended for teachers prior to any future implementation of significant changes.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

According to Kyriacou (1987) "teacher stress may be defined as the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher". The sources of teacher stress are multiple and can vary, some of which have been highlighted above. This study attempted to investigate if the inclusion of special needs students into mainstream education had any effect on the stress levels of the teachers in these schools. In so doing the purpose of the study was not to argue for or against the inclusion movement but rather to identify if there were any areas that the previous research had not covered. Much of the research to date surrounding the inclusion movement in Ireland had focused on the effect this change may have on the students both special needs students and regular education students, hence the current study aimed to examine any direct effects this change may have had on the teachers. In summary this study found no significant difference in the stress levels of regular education teachers who teach an inclusive classroom in comparison to those who do not. It also found no significant relationship between the stress levels of teachers who teach an inclusive classroom and the number of special needs students they teach, the education level taught or on their overall life orientation. The findings did however identify a significant relationship between the teacher's perceived self-efficacy and their stress levels and recommendations for future research into this area have been highlighted above. The factors that may affect a teachers stress levels should always be an area for research in order to

continue to improve this extremely important profession given the fact that these teachers are training the children, a key resource to our nation's future.

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## APPENDIX I

Dear Participant,

I am a final year student of the Art of Psychology studying at Dublin Business School. I am in the process of completing my final year project which is very much focused on educational psychology.

The following questionnaire will be used as a measuring tool for my research paper entitled “Does the inclusion of special needs students into mainstream classrooms affect teacher stress levels?”

Participation in this questionnaire is entirely voluntary and anonymous. All information gathered will be kept private and confidential and will only be used for the purpose described above.

Please note completion and returning of this questionnaire will indicate your consent for participation in this research. If you at any point wish to revoke your consent, please contact the researcher per the below contact details.

All data gathered during this project will be stored in a secure location for a period of one year after the examination process. After this time all questionnaires will be shredded and destroyed.

Dissemination and reporting of the findings gathered through this research will be submitted for examination in April 2013.

The supervisor overseeing this project is Emma Harkin and she is contactable at [emma.harkin@dbs.ie](mailto:emma.harkin@dbs.ie).

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Kind Regards,

Leanne Clooney



## QUESTIONNAIRE

The following are a number of teacher concerns. Please identify those factors which cause you stress in your present position. Read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. Then, indicate how strong the feeling is when you experience it by circling the appropriate rating on the 5-point scale. If you have not experienced this feeling, or if the item is inappropriate for your position, circle number 1 (no strength; not noticeable).

### DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

**Number of years you have taught?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How many students do you teach each day in a classroom?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How many special needs students do you teach each day in a classroom?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How many hours approximately each day do you spend planning and preparing work?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What level students do you teach? (circle the rest of your answers)**

Primary          Secondary

**Your sex:**      Male          Female

**Do you have a special needs student in your classroom?**

Yes      No

**If you responded yes to the last question, do you have SNA support in your classroom?**

Yes      No

**Do you and your peers support one another when needed?**

Yes      No

**Do you and your superiors support one another when needed?**

Yes      No

**Examples:**

I feel insufficiently prepared for my job. 1 2 3 4 5

*If you feel very strongly that you are insufficiently prepared for your job, you would circle number 5.*

I feel that if I step back in either effort or commitment,  
I may be seen as less competent. 1 2 3 4 5

*If you never feel this way, and the feeling does not have noticeable strength, you would circle number 1.*

---

|        | 1          | 2          | 3          | 4          | 5          |
|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| HOW    | no         | mild       | medium     | great      | major      |
| STRONG | strength;  | strength;  | strength;  | strength;  | strength;  |
| ?      | not        | barely     | moderately | very       | extremely  |
|        | noticeable | noticeable | noticeable | noticeable | noticeable |

---

**TIME MANAGEMENT**

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I easily over-commit myself.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I become impatient if others do things to slowly.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I have to try doing more than one thing at a time.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I have little time to relax/enjoy the time of day.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I think about unrelated matters during conversations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I feel uncomfortable wasting time.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. There isn't enough time to get things done.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I rush in my speech.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**WORK-RELATED STRESSORS**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. There is little time to prepare for my lessons/responsibilities.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. There is too much work to do.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. The pace of the school day is too fast.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. My caseload/class is too big.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. My personal priorities are being shortchanged<br>due to time demands. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. There is too much administrative paperwork in my job.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**PROFESSIONAL DISTRESS**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. I lack promotion and/or advancement opportunities.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I am not progressing my job as rapidly as I would like.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I need more status and respect on my job.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I receive an inadequate salary for the work I do.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I lack recognition for the extra work<br>and/or good teaching I do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**DISCIPLINE AND MOTIVATION**

I feel frustrated...

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. ...because of discipline problems in my classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. ...having to monitor pupil behavior.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22. ...because some students would better if they tried.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. ...attempting to teach students who are poorly motivated.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. ...because of inadequate/poorly defined discipline problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. ...when my authority is rejected by pupils/administration.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### PROFESSIONAL INVESTMENT

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26. My personal opinions are not sufficiently aired.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I lack control over decisions made about<br>classroom/school matters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I am not emotionally/intellectually stimulated on the job.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I lack opportunities for professional improvement.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### EMOTIONAL MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

|                                   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. ...by feeling insecure.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. ...by feeling vulnerable.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. ...by feeling unable to cope. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. ...by feeling depressed.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. ...by feeling anxious.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### FATIGUE MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35. ...by sleeping more than usual.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. ...by procrastinating.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. ...by becoming fatigued in a very short time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. ...with physical exhaustion.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. ...with physical weakness.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### CARDIOVASCULAR MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 40. ...with feelings of increased blood pressure. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. ...with feeling of heart pounding or racing.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. ...with rapid and/or shallow breath.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### GASTRONOMICAL MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 43. ...with stomach pain of extended duration. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. ...with stomach cramps.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. ...with stomach acid.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATIONS

I respond to stress...

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 46. ...by using over-the-counter drugs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. ...by using prescription drugs.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. ...by using alcohol.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. ...by calling in sick.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**SELF EFFICACY**

| HOW STRONG?  | 1<br>Not at all true | 2<br>Hardly true | 3<br>Moderately true | 4<br>Exactly true |
|--|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subject content to even the most difficult students.   | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 2. I know that I can maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise.   | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 3. When I try really hard, I am able to reach even the most difficult students.  | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 4. I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of helping to address my students' needs                                      | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 5. Even if I get disrupted while teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well.   | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 6. I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my students' needs even if I am having a bad day.  | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 7. If I try hard enough, I know that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my students.                                    | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 8. I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems) and continue to teach well. | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 9. I know that I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects.   | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |
| 10. I know that I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues.  | 1                    | 2                | 3                    | 4                 |

**LIFE ORIENTATION**

| HOW STRONG?  | 1<br>I agree a lot | 2<br>I agree a little | 3<br>I neither agree nor disagree | 4<br>I disagree a little | 5<br>I disagree a lot |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.                | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 2. It's easy for me to relax.                                    | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.                    | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 4. I'm always optimistic about my future.                        | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 5. I enjoy my friends a lot.                                     | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 6. It's important for me to keep busy.                           | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.                     | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 8. I don't get upset too easily.                                 | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.                | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |
| 10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad. | 1                  | 2                     | 3                                 | 4                        | 5                     |



### **Debriefing Section**

*You may detach this section for your records if you wish*

Firstly, thank you again for completing the above questionnaire, your participation is greatly appreciated.

It is my hope that the above information that has been provided will be useful in determining if the inclusion of special needs children into mainstream classrooms has any effect on teacher stress levels. The feedback provided will be measured to determine if there is any difference in the stress levels of teachers that do not have any special needs children in their classroom in comparison to those who do. It will also attempt to identify the biggest stressors for those teachers and the findings may help with the proposed recommendations that I will suggest for teachers, school and the department of education as a result.

If anyone has any questions or would like to access the results of the study please contact me directly via email, however, I would like to note that results can only be given at an overall school level and not on an individual basis.

Please note there is an independent confidential counseling service available to teachers through Carecall, contactable at anytime on 0808 800 0002. An information leaflet regarding this service can be accessed on the following website

<http://www.into.ie/NI/Teachers/TeacherHealthandWellbeing/CarecallCounsellingServices/>.

Kind regards,

Leanne Clooney

